
Joint Statement on Third Border Initiative

**By
J. Adam Ereli
United States Department of State Spokesman**

[The following is the text of the US/CARICOM/Dominican Republic joint statement on the Third Border Initiative, as released by the Department of State.]

January 12, 2004, Countries Vow to Work Together to Achieve Shared Goals

The Governments of the United States of America and of the Caribbean nations of Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, the Republic of Haiti, Jamaica, the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Republic of Suriname, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago pledge to strengthen our cooperation in responding to global and hemispheric challenges in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

In pledging to work closely together in pursuit of shared goals, the countries paid tribute to the following:

Our cultural ties, social and economic links, shared tradition of democracy, mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of individual states, and our commitment to good governance, the rule of law, human rights, individual freedoms and open economies.

Their joint statement was released on the final day of the Special Summit of the Americas, held January 12-13 in Monterre, Mexico.

The countries welcome the Third Border Initiative by stating the following:

As a valuable framework for structuring our engagement across the broad spectrum of matters that affect the prosperity as well-being of the region and its peoples. The Third Border Initiative recognizes the special significance of the Caribbean as an important partner of the United States and seeks to build on the long history of constructive engagement between the United States and the Caribbean.

The Third Border Initiative aims to focus US and Caribbean engagement through targeted programs that comprise both new and ongoing activities designed to enhance cooperation in the diplomatic, security, economic, environmental, health and education arenas without prejudice to additional areas of collaboration that may be agreed upon in the future, it provides the opportunity to focus funding and assistance on those areas where we see the greatest increased need.

We recognize that our nations are bound together by our cultural ties, social and economic links, shared tradition of democracy, mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of individual states, and our commitment to good governance, the rule of law, human rights, individual freedoms and open economies.

We therefore welcome the Third Border Initiative announced by President George W. Bush during the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001, as a valuable framework for structuring our engagement across the broad spectrum of matters that affect the prosperity and well being of the region and its peoples. The Third Border Initiative, building on the Bridgetown Partnership for Prosperity and Security of May 1997, recognizes the special significance of the Caribbean as an important partner of the United States and seeks to build on the long history of constructive engagement between the United States and the Caribbean.

We are further bound by a determination to protect our region from terrorists and criminals who would destroy our way of life and by a belief that terrorist acts, such as the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, represent a serious threat to international peace and our hemispheric security and require our governments to continue efforts to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism. We recognize that threats to our security, concerns, and other challenges are diverse in nature and multidimensional in scope, and that traditional concepts and approaches must be expanded to encompass new and non-traditional threats, which include political, economic, social, health and environmental aspects.

The objective of the Third Border Initiative is to focus US and Caribbean engagement through targeted programs that comprise both new and ongoing activities designed to enhance cooperation in the diplomatic, security, economic, environmental, health and education arenas without prejudice to additional areas of collaboration that may be agreed upon in the future. The Third Border Initiative provides the opportunity to focus funding and assistance on those areas where we see the greatest increased need. We are aware that there are other activities, projects and cooperation programs in the Caribbean region, including those administered through multilateral institutions that, while outside the specific Third Border Initiative framework, also contribute to accomplishing its goals.

We recognize our interdependence and the importance of close cooperation to combat new and emerging transnational threats that endanger the very fabric of our societies. By virtue of their small size and geographic configuration and lack of technical and financial resources, Caribbean States are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to these risks and threats, especially those posed by illicit trafficking in persons, drugs, and firearms, terrorism and other transnational criminal activities. We pledge to cooperate in combating transnational crime and terrorism, promoting regional security and justice, and ensuring the safe and secure transportation and flow of people, goods and services in the region, thereby contributing to the defense and security of the hemisphere. We are mindful that trade furthers prosperity and development and that trade and investment ties between the Caribbean and the US are essential to promoting economic development and improving the well being of our citizens. We recognize the concerns and vulnerabilities of small economies and the challenges they face in integrating successfully into the global economy. We therefore reaffirm the declaration issued at the Free Trade Area of the Americas Eighth Ministerial in Miami.

We recognize that the increasing global integration of the economic and financial domains facilitates the free movement of capital across borders. Taking advantage of this increasing integration, money laundering and other financial crimes create an environment where corruption, terrorist financing and attendant illegal practices may thrive. We will therefore continue to support the Caribbean efforts to expand a financial services industry and increase its competitiveness, while adhering to international standards and transparency in its operations.

We share the concern that the human immune-deficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic seriously threatens the stability and welfare of the entire Caribbean region. We also recognize that the pandemic causes great loss of life and untold personal suffering, weakens societies, and reduces the capability of Caribbean countries to compete in the global arena. We will therefore cooperate to build capacity in the region for HIV/AIDS prevention, education, voluntary counseling and testing, monitoring and surveillance, care and support, and cost effective treatment to counter the devastating impact of the pandemic on Caribbean societies and its potential to threaten the stability and welfare of the region.

We recognize that education and training are critical to economic growth, social development, improved standards of living, environmental protection and the reduction of poverty. We

therefore attach the highest importance to providing widespread access to affordable, quality education and teacher training.

We recognize that the Caribbean region is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes and other natural and man made disasters and are committed to strengthening national and regional institutional capacity to plan for and respond to disasters through support for disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts in the region.

We are cognizant of the importance of environmental management and will therefore support programs geared towards protecting the environment, through the promotion of environmentally friendly practices.

We will develop strategies and programs to promote the continued growth, vitality, diversity and sustainability of the Caribbean's tourism sector. The United States and the aforementioned Caribbean nations will engage in regular consultations, in pursuit of our goals of increased prosperity and freedom for our neighborhood built upon mutual confidence and security. We also agree to greater consultations on mutual interests in multilateral fora, with the objective of improved cooperation in pursuit of common ideals.

We will work to implement a program for high-level consultations and joint working groups, in accordance with an established structure, covering the broad spectrum of areas, which will enhance our cooperation. We will also work together in support of initiatives that create a deeper awareness of and a broader mutual understanding of the Caribbean Community, the Dominican Republic and the US

For the United States, the nations of the Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic, this day marks an opportunity to affirm our commitment to the democratic traditions that have bound us together and to pledge that we will work together as friends, partners and allies in the pursuit of our shared goal of a stable, secure and prosperous Caribbean region capable of embracing the new hemispheric and global realities.